

## The Future of TEPP is Now!

### Introduction

The Bureau of Tobacco Education & Prevention (TEPP) is embarking on an exciting campaign in which the full spectrum of stakeholders at the local, state, and national levels will be co-creating a national model of effective tobacco control. As we move toward an outcomes-based statewide program that is accessible and affordable for ALL Arizona residents, we've been asked by the Director's Office to publish an ongoing journal that brings an "inside view" of our efforts. So, for the next several months, we'll be publishing a bi-weekly journal that exposes the trials, tribulations, and inner workings that would usually be reserved for the water cooler, after-hours haunts, and other out-of-the-way conversations.

In contrast to the customary linear reports about goals, timelines, achievements, stop-gap measures, and so forth, we'll strive to use a narrative that is more inviting to the casual observer, more insightful to the overseer, and hopefully.....more effective in portraying what really goes on. While doing so, we invite your comments, reactions, and suggestions at all times, as our intent is to connect our world to yours, and to seek whatever ways we can to strengthen the linkages to all who have a stake in the way things are done. Of course, we will still be committed to outcomes and evidence-based planning, and will be happy to provide an updated matrix of goals and activities at anytime.

### Change is in the Air!

Now stop! Before you read any further, please take a brief personal inventory. As you read a proclamation that "change is in the air," *what are you thinking at this very moment?*

Perhaps you're telling yourself, "Oh boy, here we go again." Or maybe you're wondering why the workplace always seems so unsettled. You might even be questioning why something so obvious needs to be declared. Do the words "now tell me something I don't know" ring a bell? And beyond thoughts, you might be feeling a slight tug in your stomach as you brace yourself for yet another shift in your paradigm (which is another word for the cluster of personal beliefs, values, priorities, boundaries, and defenses that we all employ in upholding our choices, both big and small).

None of us escape change, and this is certainly true for the many talented, committed folks across the state and nation who work in tobacco control. Whether we like it or not, whether we are ready for it or not, change is always with us. Try to think of something in your life that has never changed. If we look deep enough, we realize that nothing is permanent. Political power, waistlines, hair color (for most of us), viewpoints, even mountains.....you name it.....it changes. We know this, but somehow we persist in our efforts to resist it.

### The Season Begins

For many of us, it felt like a much anticipated season opener of a football season last week when we finally kicked off the TEPP strategic planning process. After months of

talking to community members, contractors, advisory board members and TEPP staff about the need to develop a strategic plan which would guide the state's future tobacco control efforts, the big day finally arrived!

With the assistance of David Nakashima, a nationally known consultant who has helped to steer the development of tobacco control plans in several other states across the country, we took a deep breath and forged ahead on July 25<sup>th</sup> with the first meeting of our Strategic Plan Steering Committee. This core group, comprised of a few key stakeholders, met for four hours to discuss issues related to the strategic planning process, the involvement of non-traditional community partners, and the composition of the strategic planning workgroup (a thirty member Strategic Planning Workgroup that will guide the development of the strategic plan).

By day's end, the meeting was a success. Participants reported that they enjoyed the discussion and valued having the opportunity to weigh in on how the planning process should be structured. And we knew the "season" was off to a good start when David reported that evening this was going to be the most comprehensive, innovative planning process he has facilitated.

The kick-off meeting was also a clear indicator that the next six months promise to be exciting, challenging, and extremely busy as we engage and stretch the participation of literally hundreds of people across Arizona. Already, at the urging of the Steering Committee, we have expanded the schedule of community forums to over 30 events across the state, including several that are specifically geared for priority populations who are most impacted by the harmful effects of tobacco use.

The "season" will now shift into full swing on August 21<sup>st</sup>, when the larger Strategic Planning Workgroup holds its first meeting. As we move deeper into the process over the course of several months, we'll continue to give you a candid play-by-play of our experience, and in the meantime ask you not to hesitate to contact me at [tormalw@azdhs.gov](mailto:tormalw@azdhs.gov) or 602-364-0834. For comments regarding the journal and its content, please E-mail us at [bulletinboard@azdhs.gov](mailto:bulletinboard@azdhs.gov).

Stay tuned!

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